

# Let the Music Do the Talking: Keeping Music in the Curriculum

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## Abstract

Whenever schools experience budget shortages, music programs are often times the first to be impacted or even dropped. Research suggests that this could ultimately have a profound impact on students' futures. There have been multiple studies that have concluded that exposing students to music classes in school can lead to great success in their future in multiple different ways. Music education improves math, reading, communication, and motor skills. In fact, many of the most academically successful countries place a huge emphasis on music within students' studies. It provides a means of expression for students that struggle in school or with their home life. It even has multiple health benefits. As a student with 8 years of band experience and a lifetime advocate for music education, I will provide reasons, examples, and statistics to encourage others to actively support keeping music education in our school systems.

## Academic Benefits

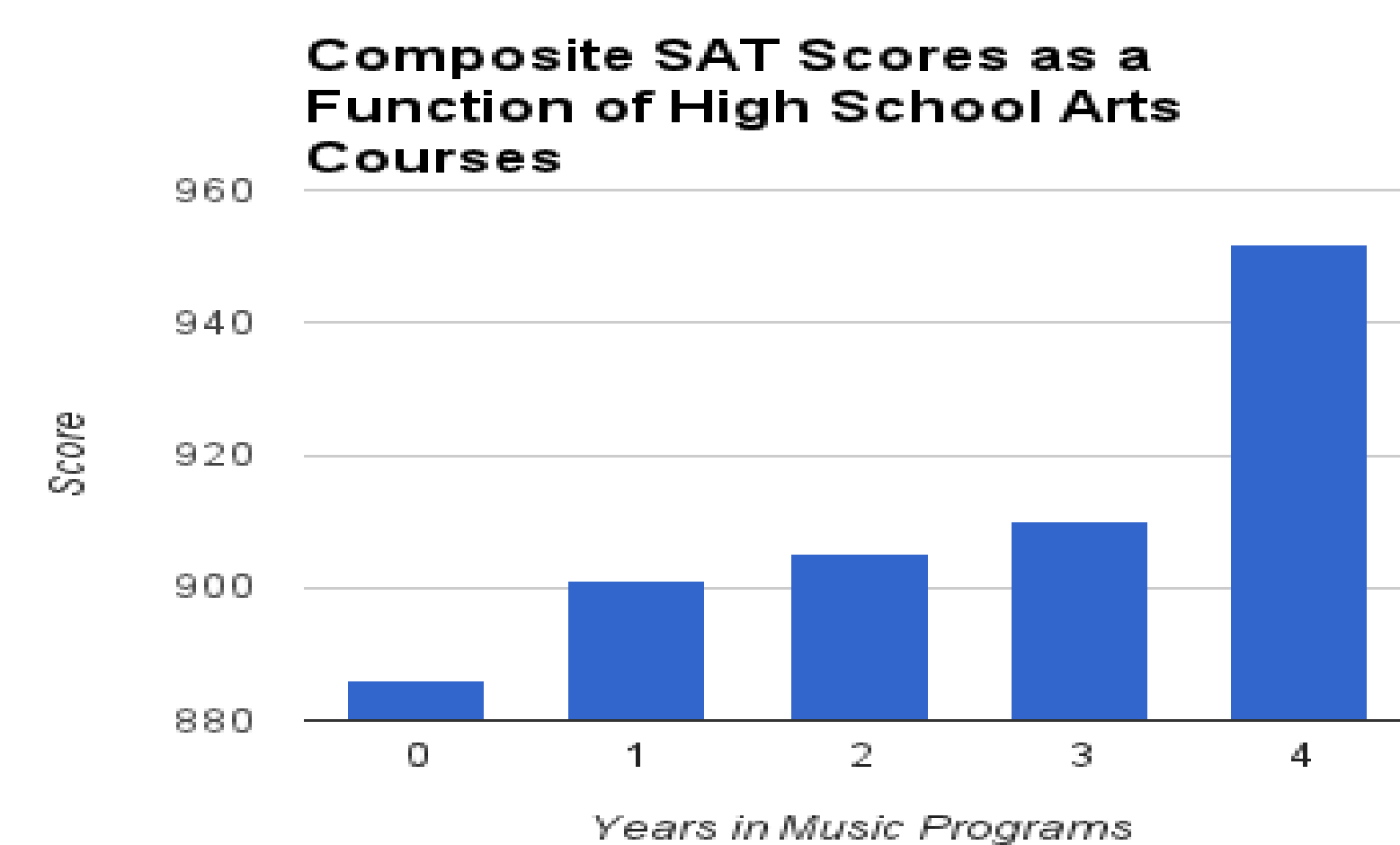
Multiple studies heavily suggest that there is a clear link between students that excel academically and their involvement in music programs. Some of the main primary subjects of interest within these studies are:

- **Math & English Scores:** A study of 4,739 elementary and middle school students revealed that students in top-quality music programs scored 17-20% better in math and 22-32% better in English than students in deficient music programs.
- **Communication Skills:** Students in music classes teach them to be more empathetic toward people of other cultures. Musical training also helps develop the part of the left side of the brain that is involved with processing language and reasoning.
- **Standardized Test Scores:** The College Entrance Examination Board discovered that students involved with public school music programs scored 107 more points on the SAT test than those without participation.
- **Life Skills:** A background that includes music education can help build problem solving, decision making, responsibility, and teamwork skills.

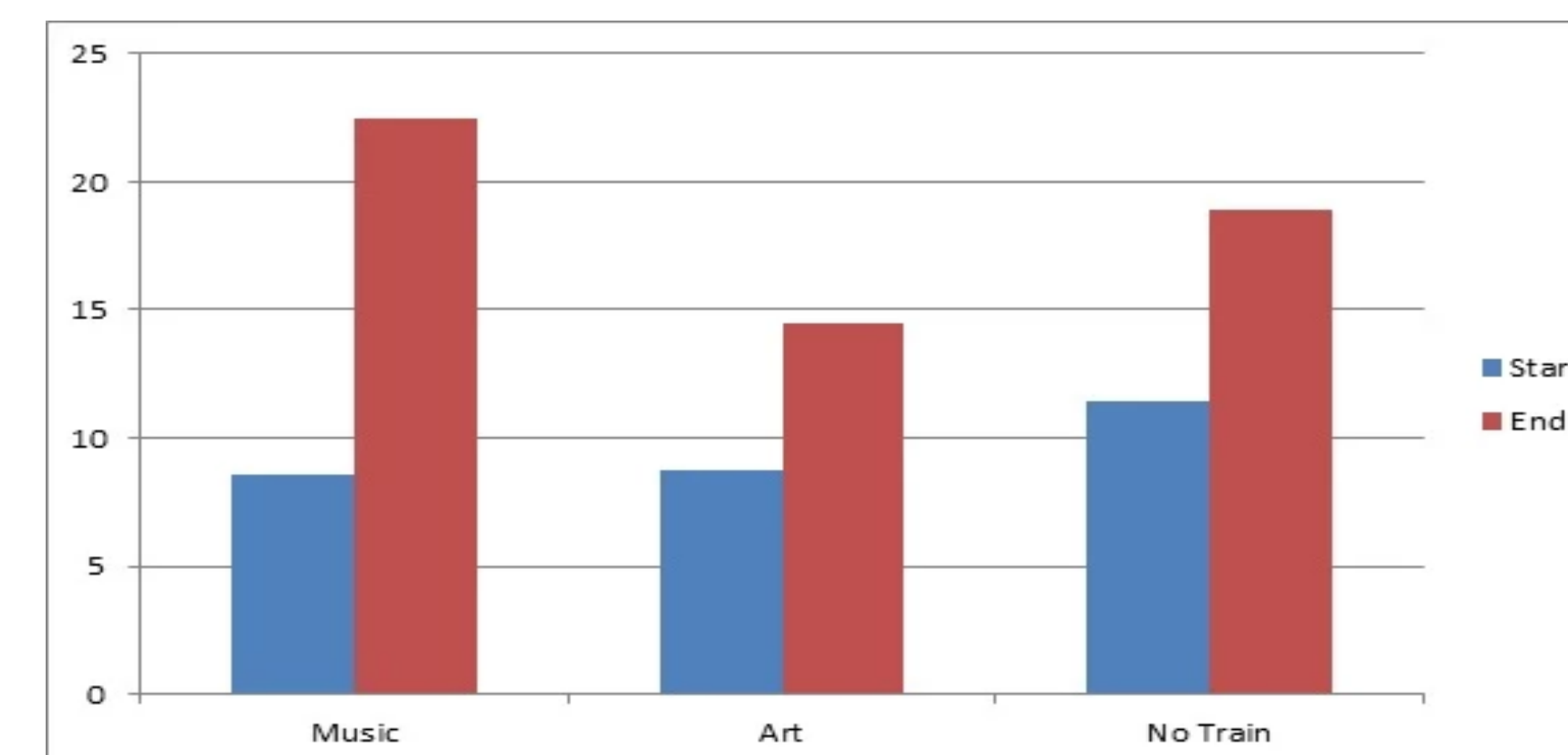
## Social/Health Benefits

Research also suggests that there are other benefits of music education outside of academia.

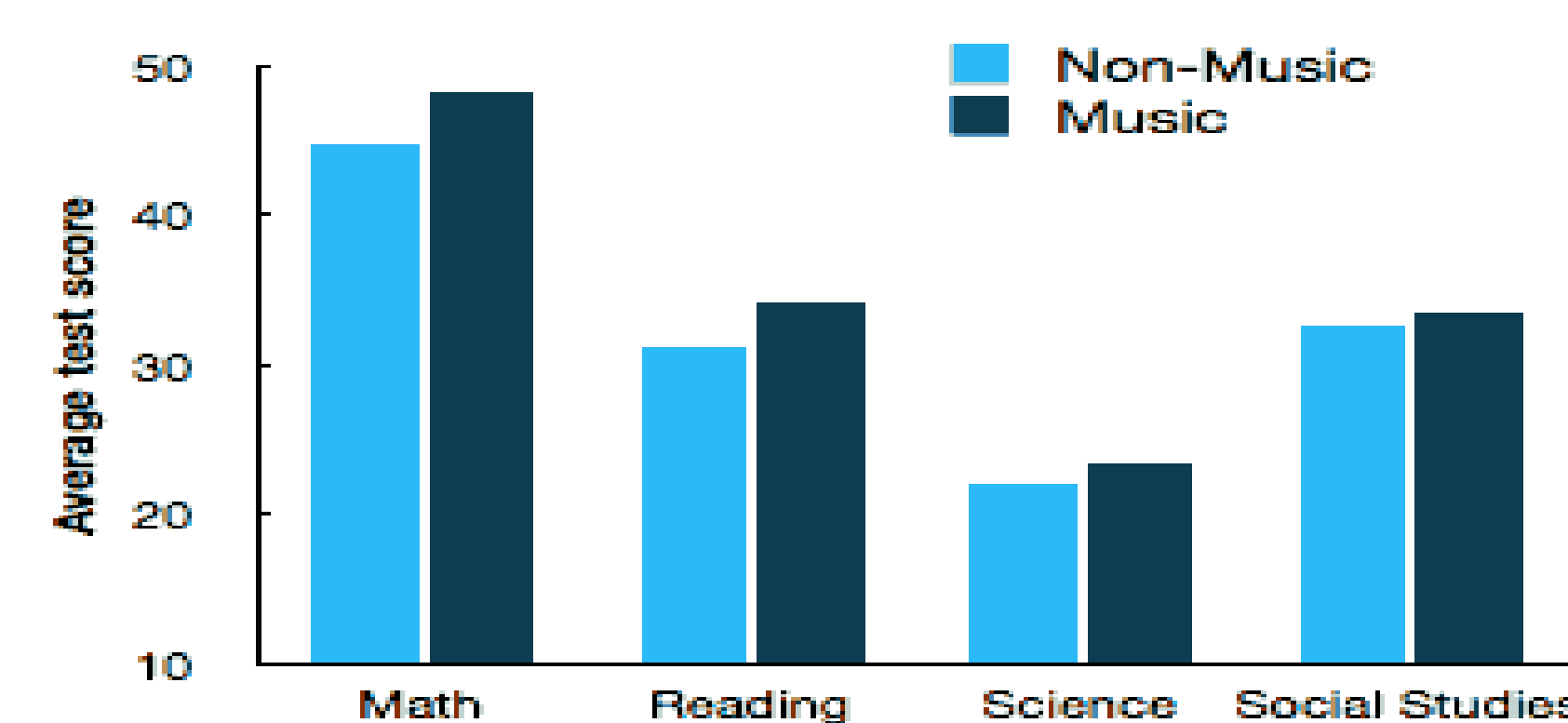
- **Expression:** Music provides an escape for students from the stress and pressure in their lives. It is also a way for students to channel their emotions in a positive medium.
- **Interests:** Music classes provide an option in students' schedules to do something they enjoy as a break from difficult core subjects. Encouraging their interests leads to better focus and overall concentration.
- **Down Syndrome:** Music can help children with down syndrome with social-emotional responsiveness, communication, reducing anxiety, increased speech output, increased interaction with peers, and receptive labeling.
- **Alcohol/Drug Abuse:** Secondary students that participated in music programs reported the lowest lifetime and current use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.



This graph shows the correlation between high school students involved in music education and SAT scores.



This chart shows the results of 159 German students' single word reading accuracy at the beginning and ending of the year after being exposed to music, art, or no training at all.



This graph shows data from a study by Peter Miksza that analyzed the records of 5,335 students that were either involved in music from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade or not at all.

## Celebrity Ambassadors

- **Michelle Obama:** Gave keynote speech at 2014 Grammy museum event to honor teachers that use music in their classrooms.
- **Chad Smith (Red Hot Chili Peppers):** Works with Turnaround Arts to incorporate music education in the classroom and spoke on a panel at the 2015 NAMM convention.
- **Meryl Streep:** Started Silver Mountain Foundation for the Arts with her husband.
- **Taylor Swift:** Partnered with Chegg to donate \$60,000 to college music departments and donated \$4 million to an education center at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.
- **Justin Timberlake:** Started the Justin Timberlake Foundation in 2001 and regularly donates to music education charities.
- **Jason Mraz:** Actively supports MusiCares, the VH1 Save The Music Foundation, and the School of the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community (SPARC) through his Jason Mraz Foundation.
- **Jack White:** Made a six figure donation to the National Blues Museum for an interactive project that will allow guests to create their own blues music with digital editing tools while also teaching them about chord structures and lyrical themes within the genre.

## Conclusion

In summary, music education plays a crucial role in the development of students. Extensive research suggests that being involved in a choir, band, or orchestra contributes to higher academic performance while providing students with an outlet for their emotions, stress, and interests. It can help students with down syndrome better communicate and learn. Those involved with music programs are less likely to turn to illegal substances. There are seemingly endless benefits to music education, thus it *must* be supported by schools, communities, and parents while also being funded by governments.

In order to assure that music education remains a staple in our education systems, we all need to do our part to advocate for it. We can attend school board meetings, execute fundraisers for struggling programs, and support organizations that advocate for the cause. The resources listed below provide you with information, tools, and statistics that you can utilize to advocate for keeping music in our schools.

## Resources

The NAMM Foundation: <http://www.nammfoundation.org/>  
VH1 Save the Music Foundation: <http://www.vh1savethemusic.org/>  
Music for All: <http://www.musicforall.org/who-we-are/advocacy>  
National Association for Music Education: <http://musiced.nafme.org/>  
Turnaround Arts: <http://turnaroundarts.peah.gov/>

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